

LETTER

OF

THE MOST REV. DR. NULTY,

BISHOP OF MEATH,

TO

THE MOST REV. DR. BAGSHAWE,

BISHOP OF NOTTINGHAM,

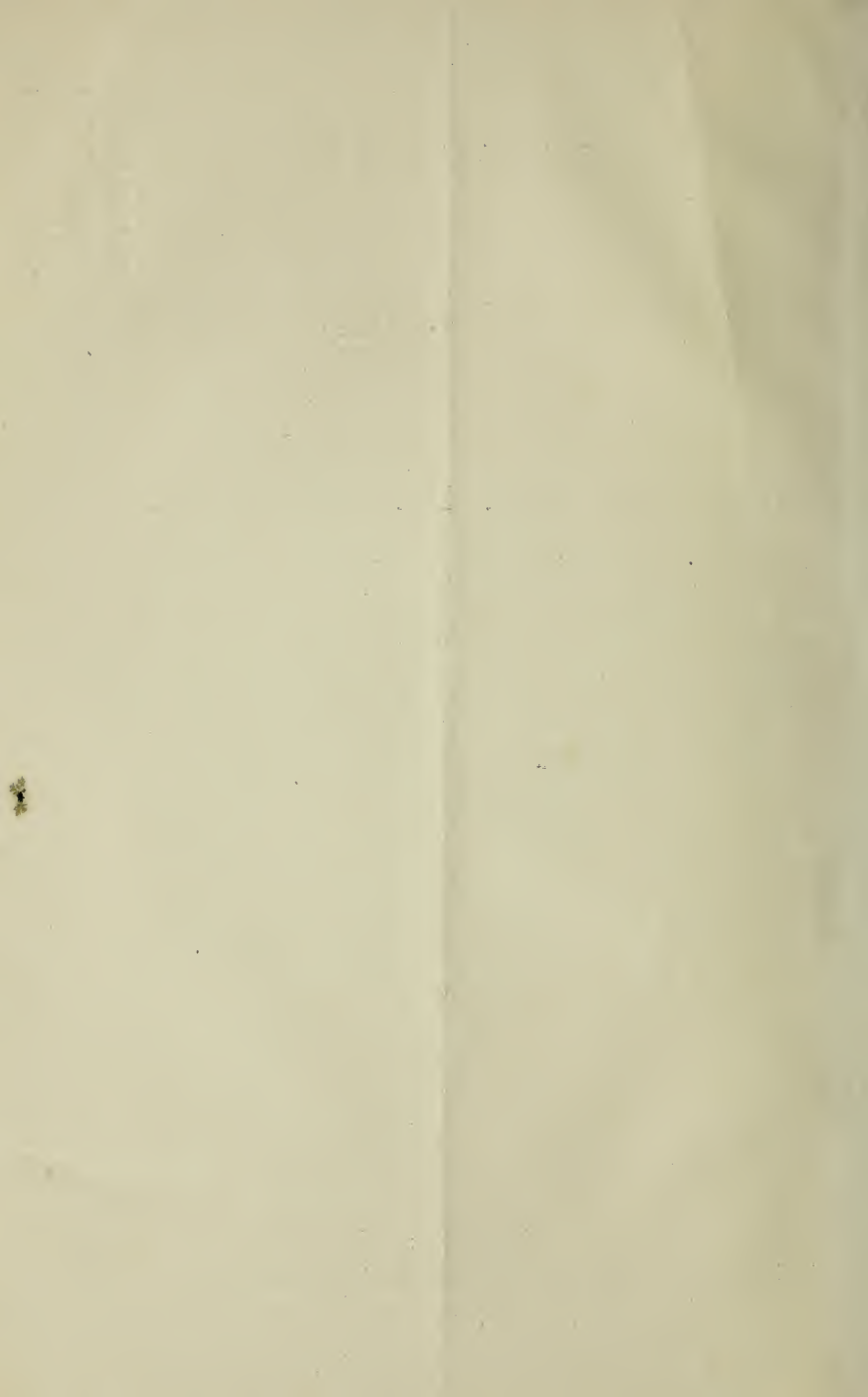
ON

THE AVOWED HOSTILITY OF THE RADICAL PARTY TO
CATHOLIC EDUCATION IN VOLUNTARY SCHOOLS,
AND THE NECESSITY OF UNION BETWEEN
ENGLISH AND IRISH CATHOLICS TO
RESIST THEM.

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HOW MAY THE HOSTILITY OF ENGLISH RADICALS TOWARDS CATHOLIC EDUCA- TION IN VOLUNTARY SCHOOLS BE COUNTERACTED AND DEFEATED ?

MY DEAR LORD,

The feelings of exceptional kindness, affection, and esteem, which you invariably display towards our race and nation, are extremely grateful and pleasing to us. To think kindly of us, to speak respectfully of us, and, on all suitable occasions, to write elegantly and eloquently in favour of our temporal as well as of our spiritual interests, seem to be a positive enjoyment to you. Though we are but *mere Irish*, yet you maintain that we are genuine Catholics notwithstanding; that, as such, we inherit glorious traditions; and that we hold in our hands incontestable claims to the respect and esteem of our co-religionists in England, and in every other country as well. Although we are poor, humble, and persecuted, your Lordship regards our being so as rather an argument in our favour; because you remember that poverty and lowliness were the distinctive characteristics of the early Christians, whom the Apostle loved, and of whom he wrote that there were not among them "many wise according to the flesh, nor many mighty, nor many noble." Keenly to appreciate kindly feelings like these—gratefully to remember and generously to reciprocate them—are amongst the noblest, and, at the same time, the most incontestable traits of our national character. Should similar sentiments of mutual respect and esteem, of reciprocal affection and confidence

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ever arise between the English and the Irish races—drawing them nearer and closer together, and moulding them into one harmonious moral body, animated with one spirit and actuated with the same friendly desires for each other's peace and welfare—then it could be said with truth that the Christian religion had done a great deal for the elevation and improvement of both races.

It appears to me that the Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster and your Lordship have done more than any two men living for the creation of such a feeling of international charity as would merge social aversions, political differences, and national prejudices, in a supernatural brotherhood of peace, confidence, and mutual good-will.

One can more easily discern and measure the strength and energy of the obstacles that have hitherto impeded the realisation of these laudable designs, by viewing them from the standpoint opposed to his own. We find it very hard to keep ourselves above the suspicion that some English Catholics regard us with feelings kindred to those which, in the very infancy of the Church, the first Christians entertained for the first Gentile converts. We learn from St. Paul that, whilst these proselytes from Judaism regarded the great gift of faith as a thing to which they themselves were entitled by a kind of right of inheritance, they held that it was purely owing to a great and exceptional mercy on the part of God that it was not withheld from the converted Gentiles. They fancied that, whilst they themselves ennobled and imparted dignity to this great gift by embracing it, the very admission of the converted Gentiles to a share in that gift, to some extent degraded and dishonoured it. But how shocked and humiliated must they not have felt when the Apostle assured them that, to receive the gift of faith, they needed the mercy of God just as much as the Gentiles whom they despised; and that it was not through any deserts of their own, nor of their fathers either, but through the purely gratuitous mercy of God, that they themselves, no less than the converted

Pagans, became believers. Peer and peasant must therefore thoroughly convince themselves that, to become true Catholics, each equally needed the mercy of God; and, further; that in the Divine organization of the Church, there is neither inferiority nor superiority, but the equality of a Divine brotherhood, which ennobles both, by raising them to the dignity of membership in the mystic Body of Christ, that is to say, to a sort of Divine and mysterious kindred and union with our Lord, which, the Scripture tells us, is in the exact prototype of the union that exists between the head and the members of the human body.

The gift of divine faith is the root and source, the very soul and vivifying principle of membership in Christ's mystic body and of justification itself. True Catholics always esteemed it as a gift of transcendent importance; and the Irish people proved their loyalty and attachment to it, by suffering the forfeiture of their property and the confiscation of their estates; by their courage and constancy in the prison-cell, on the rack, under the lash, and even on the blood-stained scaffold. Honours, riches, emoluments counted as things of no value when there was question of imperilling, or safely preserving, the precious jewel of the faith. It is indeed true that England, as a nation, apostatized from that faith; but there were countless glorious exceptions—heroic confessors—who fearlessly resisted and boldly denounced the national apostacy. For their advocacy of the faith a price was set on their heads; hundreds of them suffered fines and imprisonment; and many of them, like Bishop Fisher and Sir Thomas More, sacrificed for it not only their fortunes, but their very lives. Besides the great and brilliant galaxy of learned, disinterested, and self-denying converts who are at present the pride and glory of the English Church, English Catholics *proper*, considering the paucity of their numbers, ought to be regarded as the lineal descendants of Confessors and Martyrs.

Standing, therefore, on these glorious traditions, nothing

could be more reasonable than to expect that the eminently wise and practical suggestions lately thrown out by your Lordship, would at once meet with the sanction and approval of our co-religionists in England as well as of ourselves. The Irish Parliamentary Party had already received from the Irish nation a commission to strive and struggle by all constitutional means for the recovery of our national rights and liberties in the Imperial Parliament. Whatever may be said *for* or *against* the justice and reasonableness of these rights, the fact that, in the coming Parliament, they will be demanded by the practically unanimous vote of a thoroughly Catholic nation, is an argument of no small weight in their favour. This same Parliamentary Party had been further deputed by the unanimous voice of the whole Irish Episcopate to assert and promote in Parliament the rights and interests of Catholic Education in Ireland. Your Lordship then suggested the wisdom of also entrusting it with a similar commission in favour of Catholic Education in England. Thus the united Catholic opinion of the whole Empire would then acquire increased, indeed irresistible, force by being authoritatively accredited to the only Party existing that was capable of formulating and giving expression to it. As a natural and logical consequence of this arrangement, it would become a duty with Catholics, at the coming Elections, to strengthen the hands of the Party which was charged with the destinies and momentous interests of Catholic education.

Now, if a crisis can ever possibly arise in which the Catholics of the two nations would be imperatively called upon generously to divest themselves of their political and national jealousies and differences, and to throw their united energies into one combined effort to save their common Mother, the Church, from disaster and ruin, it appears to me that we are in the very turning-point of such a crisis at the present moment. The fundamental, natural rights of parents, liberty of conscience, and the most sacred and venerable privileges and interests of the Church, are just

now insolently questioned, and, a little later on, will be impiously violated and destroyed, if they be not energetically defended. Catholic Education, which supplies the Church in these islands with her heart's blood, is threatened with simple annihilation just now in England at all events: shortly after, Catholic Education in Ireland will be similarly assailed.

The fundamental law of nature itself emphatically proclaims that the education of the child belongs of right to the Parents, through whose instrumentality God Himself imparted to it existence, life, and individuality. On the Parents, with whom the existence of the child thus originated, rests the responsibility of preserving and perpetuating it. While the rest of the world regards that child with coldness and indifference, and feels no interest whatever in its life or its welfare, it is dearer and nearer to its Parents than they are to themselves. There is no relationship so close or kindred so near, there are no ties of affinity stronger or closer than those which exist between a child and its parents. He is truly "flesh of their flesh, and bone of their bone," and their dearest and best-beloved blood circulates through his veins. The love with which nature itself has inspired them for that child is the strongest, the noblest, the most disinterested, and the most indestructible passion of the human heart. By implanting that parental love in the heart of man, God has abundantly provided for the enlightenment and culture of the immortal soul, as well as for the animal wants and requirements of the mortal body, during the helplessness of infancy. He has endowed even the fiercest of savage beasts with instincts which make it impossible for them to neglect providing, even at the risk of their own lives, the food and nourishment required for the support of their young. Should reckless, dissolute, and intemperate parents sometimes neglect to make similar provision for the bodily wants and necessities of their children, it is because they run counter to the very instincts of humanity, and have degraded human

nature to a level lower even than that of the beast. But, besides the part of that child that is material, mortal, and perishable, there is another and a nobler part which is spiritual and indestructible. And, as the instincts of nature oblige the beast to make the best provision it can for the animal wants of its young--and it has no other; so the noble feeling of parental love, enlightened and guided by reason, enables Parents to recognise and appreciate the higher wants and necessities of the soul, and constrains them, with an irresistibly persuasive force, to supply the mental culture and the intellectual enlightenment on which the happiness of their children in time and in eternity depends. The immortal soul, which is the principle of life to the body, enjoys a higher independent life of its own, which survives and flourishes after the body has passed into a state of corruption and decay. That life of the soul began certainly *in time*; but it will end neither in time nor in eternity. The soul has indeed an important part to act in time; but it has a more exalted and divine destiny to fulfil in eternity. The object, therefore, at which the true education of a child must always essentially aim, is the improvement, the perfection, and the happiness of its existence in the one state as well as in the other. The good or bad use which he makes of his life, his liberty, and his free-will in time, will fix irrevocably the character of his destiny in eternity. Education is, therefore, a kind of apprenticeship in which the child is instructed, trained, and prepared for the due and efficient discharge of his duties and obligations, and for the proper performance of those self-denying deeds which will make him just, righteous, and noble here, and entitle him to never-ending bliss hereafter. It must, in consequence, be essentially religious as well as secular. This is exactly the idea which we Catholics have formed of it.

A system of education which avowedly disbelieves, denies, or even doubts the immortal existence and the eternal happiness of the child in the world to come, and which

therefore merely instructs and prepares him for the part he has to act and the things he has to do in this world *exclusively*, is fundamentally false, and, moreover, supremely mischievous and irreligious. An education which professes not to disbelieve or to deny the immortal existence of the soul in a future state, but professes simply to ignore it, and, by ignoring, discredits and decries it, besides being imperfect and incomplete, is, in a Christian country, impracticable, and tends gradually and insensibly to paganise the child subjected to its influence. This is, I think, sometimes called State Education. For my part I can see no practical difference between these two systems : both appear equally mischievous ; and, of the two, *avowed* secularism seems the honester.

Now, every system of education carries on its operations, through the mental or intellectual culture of the soul, by secular or by religious knowledge. The soul has its wants, its necessities and requirements ; and these are ordinarily just as imperative and as exacting as are the animal wants of the body. It hungers and thirsts and yearns after its proper congenial food with as much eagerness and keenness of desire as the body. The bread on which it lives ; the food and nourishment on which it thrives and grows into the fulness of perfection and maturity in time and in eternity, are knowledge, enlightenment and truth. To withhold from it its proper and congenial food ; to leave it in ignorance of what it has to do here, of why it came into this world, and of what is to happen to it when it leaves this life—is virtually to starve it. It will consequently linger and languish, and become worse than worthless, and eventually it must die of the mortal maladies of vice and idleness. During the helplessness of infancy, the child is as incapable of providing for the higher crying and exacting necessities of the life of the soul, as he is of supplying the requirements and wants of the body. The very fact of nature's having implanted those intellectual necessities in the soul, implies that somebody is under the responsibility of providing for them. But nobody

except its parents cares for it. As, therefore, nature has, in instinct and love, made ample provision for the animal wants of the young of even the brute creation, so has it made similar and sufficient provision for the spiritual wants and necessities of the soul of the child, in the reason and in the exceptionally noble and disinterested love which it has implanted in the hearts of its parents. The duty, therefore, of benefiting the child with its greatest possible good, of providing for its most pressing and indispensable want, of enriching it with what conduces more than any other thing on earth to its temporal and eternal happiness, devolves, in the arrangements of Divine Providence, only on those who cannot help loving that child with an ardent and unchangeable love. The parent who neglects to provide for the animal wants of his child, and who sees it perishing with hunger and want, when it is in his power to preserve it, is unnatural and more degraded than the beast; but the parent who wilfully neglects the education of his child is more depraved and more unnatural still, because the life of the soul is of vastly greater moment than the life of the body, and the spiritual hunger and thirst and destitution of the soul are the worst of all evils, because they are of a higher order, and are often not merely temporal but eternal.

Here, then, is an Apostleship established by nature herself. It is the first and the oldest of all Apostleships. It was established by God Himself in all nations, and for the instruction and education of all successive generations. The individuals elected for this Divine mission are parents exclusively, because they and they alone have been prepared and qualified by nature successfully to fulfil it. The education given by this Apostleship of nature is essentially religious, because Christian parents feel a deeper interest in the eternal salvation of their children than they do in even their temporal happiness. To force these parents, in defiance of their natural rights, to accept for their children a system of education which their consciences condemn, is an intolerable and a

revolting tyranny. Should Mr. Chamberlain and his Radical following succeed in forcing on the country a system of Secular Education and Board Schools, it will then become the duty of parents to do, at the bidding of the Church, what St. Joseph did at the bidding of the Angel—to arise at once and carry off their children in safety to Egypt: that is to say, to withdraw their children from these schools, and let them remain in the safety and security of comparative ignorance, rather than have their faith corrupted and murdered by the poison of heresy or infidelity.

Many years have now elapsed since the Infidels and Atheists of France formed the diabolical design of extirpating Christianity, root and branch, out of that beautiful old Catholic country. After much discussion, deliberation and debate, the surest and quickest and most effective agency which they could find for the accomplishment of their purpose, was exactly that system of Education which Mr. Chamberlain now endeavours to force on the reluctant acceptance, not alone of all the Catholics, but of all the Christian communities in England and in Ireland. In France they formulated their educational system with clearness, accuracy and precision; and, as Frenchmen never halt in compromises, but follow their principles out to their logical conclusions, they gave it *at once*, in all its *entirety* and *fulness*. They put it into a highly attractive and elegant epigram, consisting of only four words: *Education gratuite laïque et obligatoire*. If this system had met with anything like general acceptance, the power and courage and political influence of the Church of France would be very different from what it actually displayed at the late October elections. Till very recently the Catholics of France were distracted, divided, and split up into political factions bitterly opposed to one another. Their profound distrust and deplorable estrangement from each other made union and combination amongst them on any common ground—even in defence of the Church herself—seem impracticable and impossible. The apparent indifference with which they regarded the

suppression of the Religious Orders, the attempted annihilation of Catholic Education, and the suffering of the Church itself, became the scandal of Europe. But they were weak because they were divided ; and it was really because they were too weak that they did not prevent the excesses which they bitterly deplored. They have at last awakened from the nightmare in which they slumbered ; they have flung their political differences to the winds, in the face of the common enemy, and although badly prepared and very imperfectly organized, they have, at the late elections, led their battalions in millions into action, and have dealt their godless oppressors a stunning blow from which they will not soon recover. They are now sensitively alive to the importance and indispensable necessity of union, organization and discipline ; and it can hardly be doubted that the next General Elections will prove that the infidels and freethinkers who are represented by the faction now in power, are no more than a mere fraction of the people of France.

Mr. Chamberlain's educational system then has not the merit of originality nor even of novelty : it is an antiquated, worn-out and cast away instrument, not of educational enlightenment, but of educational impiety. It originated with the freethinkers and infidels of France ; it was offered to the people of France with the avowed object of destroying the Christian religion ; but the people of France have scornfully and disdainfully rejected it, and hence, as the late elections conclusively prove, the masses of the French people are profoundly Christian still.

A most remarkable peculiarity of English legislation is that, as a rule, it accepts principles, not in their complete and absolute truth ; but piecemeal and, as it were, in fragments. Hence it is that many of our laws continue for years nothing more than compromises with the principles on which they profess to be founded. These compromises, however, display a perceptible tendency to gravitate, by a slow tentative process of development in harmony with public opinion, to

the full recognition of the principles on which they are based, and to the consequences logically deducible from them. Not many years have elapsed since the principle of compulsory education—the “*education obligatoire*” of the French infidel system—was accepted by the legislature and incorporated in English municipal law. After years of incubation and slow progressive development, and after public opinion had been carefully and skilfully manipulated in its favour, the Radicals now assume that the National mind is ripe for the admission of the principle of free education—the “*education gratuite*”—of the French infidel system. After these two principles shall have been admitted to the sanction of law, the recognition of the “*education laïque*”—the third and last plank in the infidel platform—becomes necessary and inevitable, on the universally admitted principle that representation should accompany taxation. All voluntary schools are then necessarily destroyed. Mr. Jesse Collins and his Bradford admirers seem then to have acted rashly and imprudently the other day, and perhaps spoiled the game now played by abler hands than theirs, in precipitating at once the question of the universal establishment of School Boards and Godless Schools. They would have acted on more enlightened tactics had they confined their admiration and approval to the principle of free education itself, which, as yet at least, has to be carried into law. Should it, however, pass into law, the universal establishment of School Boards and the universal destruction of voluntary schools will follow of necessity, and as a matter of course. Making, therefore, due allowance for the slow, progressive development of English laws towards the full recognition of the principles they embody, it must be plain to any thinking mind that the Radicals are now, and have been for years past, trying to do in England what the infidels have tried and failed to do in France; that there is no substantial difference between their respective educational systems; and that, if England accepts what France has refused, she must in a very short time

become thoroughly unchristian. Protestant England and Catholic Ireland have here, for once in their histories, a common platform on which they can stand together, and unite their energies in a common effort to resist this impious principle of free education, which aims unquestionably at nothing short of the extirpation of Christianity out of these islands.

This principle is, as I have shown, not merely impious, but false and even absurd. For if any earthly reason or necessity existed to bind or justify the State in relieving parents from the responsibility of the education and enlightenment of the souls of their children, that same reason would bind it, and with greater force, to release them from the obligation of providing food and raiment for their bodies also. . Parents are bound by the severest and most sacred of all natural obligations to the due fulfilment of both these duties; and, therefore, to relieve them of all responsibility to the one, and leave them manacled by the severest of all moral obligations to the other, is irrational and absurd. The same principle that justifies the State in charging itself with the responsibility of the child's education, strictly obliges it also to submit to the responsibility of supporting and maintaining it. Again, no authority on earth has the power of repealing or of dispensing wholesale with a law of nature, enacted by God Himself and published to mankind by the light of reason. But Mr. Chamberlain and the Radicals tells us that at the time of the passing of that law, God was badly informed; that in fact He made a mistake, and entrusted the education of the child to the wrong parties. Therefore they feel themselves called on to take that sacred trust out of the hands in which God had placed it, and where the heart of the Parent watches over it with jealous affection and love, and transfer it to the State, which has no heart at all, and can feel no affection whatever for it. But no power on earth can take that trust out of the hands in which God has placed it, more especially to recommit it to

the State; that is to say, to the worst hands that could be charged with it. Undoubtedly the State can, and in many instances would be bound, to aid and assist the Parent in effectively fulfilling and carrying out the provisions of the trust that Providence had committed to him. The State could, and in several instances would be bound, to assist and co-operate with the Parent in securing for the child the education he preferred, and which he conscientiously believed would be the best and the most useful for him. But the State can never wrest from the Parent the trust committed to him by Providence; it can never seize or appropriate it. Neither can it ever question the Parent's right to lead the education of his child into the regions of religious knowledge; but whilst it must not stop him or offer the slightest resistance to him in going there, the State may not follow him, nor feel itself bound to assist or co-operate with him. In the region of secular knowledge the State is, as it were, in its own congenial element. But whilst always respecting the sacred rights of the Parent, and never meddling with the absolute and unconditional control given to him by God even there over the education of his child, the State can and ought to cheerfully and generously co-operate with the Parent in carrying on the secular education which he deems the best and the most useful for the child, and liberally remunerate the literary and scientific results which that education produces. This is the principle that underlies, and more than justifies, the ungenerous and niggardly assistance extended by the State to voluntary schools.

But should death have robbed the child of its Parents, and reduced it to the destitution of orphanage, then the State steps in, *in loco parentis*, and inherits all the obligations and responsibilities of a parent to that child, during the helplessness of its orphanage. It must, therefore, make provision for its temporal wants, and, at the same time, charge itself with the culture of its mind and the enlightenment of its soul in secular and religious knowledge. The first of these duties is

left absolutely and unconditionally to the humanity and discretion of the State; but the fulfilment of the second duty is by no means left discretional with it. In that event the law of the land, as well as the common sense of mankind, has issued an instruction to the State that the orphan must be brought up in the religion professed by its parents, and that its intellectual culture and enlightenment in secular and in religious knowledge, must all go to make up that specific form of education which his parents would have preferred, and which they would themselves have naturally given it. British law, therefore, as well as the common feeling and public conscience of civilized and Christian nations, unanimously and emphatically proclaims that the parent, and not the State, is the divinely appointed guardian and arbiter of the education of his child; and, therefore, that even when he is dead, his will is the law by which the religion in which his orphan child is to be reared, as well as the education he must receive, will be finally settled.

The principle, therefore, of free, gratuitous education by the State is false, irreligious, and utterly subversive of the sacred natural rights of parents, and besides leading logically to palpable absurdities, is plainly repugnant to the feelings and public conscience of Christendom. Nevertheless, Mr. Chamberlain and the Radicals are just now pushing that principle to the front with matchless ability and skill, and claiming for it such an amount of importance and precedence over all other public questions, as would lead one to believe that the very existence of the Empire demanded its immediate recognition by the Legislature. And yet they cannot allege the pressure of any public necessity, or the peril of any public danger, in its favour. Neither can they hold out any reliable promises that any great exceptional good will accrue from it to the public, even in the matter of education itself. England has enjoyed for years all the advantages arising from the principle of compulsory education; and it is hard to conceive on what other principle the actual school

attendance in that country can be increased and multiplied much further. What then is the motive of the excessive zeal, and the deep exceptional interest, which the Radicals feel in the principle of free education? What is the living, active, energetic principle that underlies and has started into life the movement now set on foot in its favour; that is daily increasing its strength, adding to its influence, and multiplying enormously the number of its adherents? Three acres of land and a cow, together with the principle of *free* education by the State, are the two great public benefits on which the Radicals confidently hope to ride triumphantly into place and power. I can find no satisfactory explanation of this phenomenon, except by assuming, what I believe to be an unquestionable fact, that the Radical Party in England, like the infidel factions in Italy and France, is (perhaps quite unconsciously to itself) profoundly and fanatically anti-Christian. Anti-Christian hatred is now, and ever has been, fiercely aggressive and combative, especially where it sees that by storming one stronghold only, it becomes absolute master of the whole situation, leaving the enemy no alternative but unconditional surrender. If the Radical Party now succeeds in passing into law the principle of free education, then the public education of the Christian youth of these Islands becomes at once "*laïque*," that is to say unchristian and irreligious, as it has already become compulsory or "*obligatoire*." The Radicals themselves admit, and glory in the admission, that the voluntary schools must then go and go at once. The Christian youth of this Empire will then pass directly under the influence of godless Board Schools, with the result that the coming generation of Englishmen will become, not exactly infidel and hating God, but purely pagan, profoundly forgetting and ignoring Him. The question then arises, will the Radicals succeed in luring Christian Parents by false and deceitful promises into a base betrayal of the trust that Providence has placed in their hands? Will they, at the bidding of the Radicals, resign the

duty of educating their children; even at the cost of the severe and painful, but at the same time, the noble and generous sacrifices which God expects from them for the temporal and eternal welfare of their children? Or will they be so weak, so profoundly selfish, and so utterly insensible to to their children's welfare, that, to rid themselves of the trouble of educating them, they will make an absolute and an unconditional surrender of their immortal souls, to be cruelly murdered by the impious and pestiferous falsehoods which the Radical creed teaches? The only bribe which Radical statesmen can hold out for this unnatural betrayal of their trust, is that they will no longer be required to deduct from their earnings the sixpences or the shillings per week which they had hitherto paid for the education of their children. But the Christian parent who would sell the soul of his child for such a miserable pittance would be lower and more degraded than the starving peasant, who would barter the soul of his child to the infamous Irish Proselytisers for "soup, penny rolls, and bacon." This bribe, like Dead Sea apples, is fair and attractive to the eye, but bitter and nauseous to the taste, and is incapable of bearing a moment's examination. For under the proposed arrangement, the Radicals relieve the parent of the burden of the education of his child, only for the purpose of re-imposing it in a heavier, a severer, and a more galling form. They will not pay for the education of his child out of their own pockets, but wholly and entirely out of the public rates. Now, British parents are all, nearly to a man, directly or indirectly British ratepayers. Therefore they must pay into the rates the whole amount that the Radicals think fit to take out of them for the education of their children; and they must pay, in addition, for the costly and luxurious maintenance of a cloud of idle, worthless Board School officers, and miles of red-tapeism; besides being fraudulently cheated and deceived into the bargain. Therefore the bribe now offered to the public by the Radicals has no earthly advantage to recom-

mend it, and every honest man must reprobate the fraudulent designs of those who hold it out as a bait to lure thoughtless and unsuspecting parents into the unnatural crime of having a hand in the moral ruin of their own children.

Mr. Chamberlain commences his aggressive operations against the voluntary schools of these islands, in England, where he thinks they are weakest, and where he anticipates less serious and less stubborn resistance than in any other place. He leaves the task of destroying the Irish voluntary schools to the Irish themselves; and he confidently expects that their fate will be exactly the same as that of their kindred Institutions in England. I do not write from conjecture or hearsay, but with absolute certainty, when I accredit Mr. Chamberlain with a fixed determination and purpose of destroying the English voluntary schools on the first favourable opportunity. And yet a very large proportion of these voluntary schools were erected by the Catholics of England in the face of the most formidable and discouraging difficulties. Enormous sums of money were expended in building and furnishing them, and in purchasing the sites on which they stand. After years of severe and incessant labour, and with an incalculable amount of mental anxiety and toil, their system of management has been immensely improved. The training, the intellectual culture, the efficiency and zeal of their teaching staffs have risen to a high standard of excellence, and the splendid educational results they have produced—when contrasted with those of the Board schools—were achievements of which English Catholics felt justly proud. And now the fruit of years of excessive toil, of patient and persevering labour, and of enormous pecuniary sacrifice, is to be cruelly destroyed and mercilessly brushed away.

Anyone who has studied the conditions under which modern social or political warfare is carried on, will at once admit that the tactics adopted by Radical statesmen against these voluntary schools are judicious and skilful. The justice the necessity and usefulness of Catholic Education in voluntary

schools, counts certainly as something considerable in their coming struggle with the Radicals. The clearness, persuasiveness and force with which the argument made by the English Bishops in their favour appeals to the public conscience, to the public sense of justice and fair play, adds certainly very much to their chances of success. These conditions are useful, perhaps even necessary, but they are not sufficient to save them. They must, moreover, have the support of a strong social or political power, powerful enough to inspire and command public respect for them on the one hand, and to discourage and discomfit their enemies on the other. But no such power is forthcoming for their protection and defence; and their present condition seems one of utter helplessness. Catholic Education in Irish voluntary schools is by no means so defenceless.

The Irish Church still retains the great moral power of withdrawing the Catholic youth of the nation from all the Educational Institutions in which their faith might be imperilled, and to which their parents and their clergy were conscientiously opposed. This was her great, and indeed, her only defensive weapon against the countless educational systems that were successively forced on the country, for the certain, and oftentimes for the avowed, purpose of destroying the faith of our people.

It appears to me that the value and efficiency of this great defensive weapon have not been appreciated as they deserve, even by Irishmen themselves. But, beyond all question, we have often stood in good need of it. It has often rendered incalculable service in many a perilous crisis of our history. In the reign of George II., A.D. 1733, an Act was passed authorizing "the erection of English Protestant Schools in the Kingdom of Ireland." In the preamble of this Act the common motive for erecting these schools, as well as the Royal Schools, the Diocesan Schools, Erasmus Smith's Schools, and all the other educational Institutions of a kindred kind, is clearly and distinctly stated, as well as the

common objects at which they all aimed ; and, further, the great moral agency by which their aggressive and malignant influence had been repelled and defeated is also clearly set forth in this same preamble. At the risk of becoming intolerably tedious, I will transcribe the greater part of this preamble :

“That the generality of the Popish natives appear to have very little sense or knowledge of religion but what they implicitly take from their clergy, to whose guidance in such matters they seem wholly to give themselves up, and thereby are kept not only in gross ignorance, but also, in great disaffection to our person and government, scarce any of them appearing to have been willing to abjure the Pretender to our throne. So that if some effectual method be not made use of to instruct these great numbers of people in the principles of true religion and loyalty, there is little prospect but that superstition and idolatry, and disaffection to us and our royal posterity, will, from generation to generation, be propagated amongst them. That amongst the ways proper to be taken for converting and civilizing of the said deluded persons and bringing them (through the blessing of God) in time to be good Christians and faithful subjects, one of the most necessary, and without which all others are likely to prove ineffectual, has always been thought to be the erecting and establishing of a sufficient number of English Protestant schools, wherein the children of the Irish natives may be instructed in the English tongue and the fundamental principles of true religion.”

The “ignorance, the superstition, and the idolatry” with which our countrymen of that day are here charged, are a remarkable confession, and furnish an unanswerable proof, that they were genuine Catholics at all events, and that they had intelligence enough to discern and discriminate between Catholic truth and heretical falsehood. The frame of mind in which these Irish Catholics then happened to be, and which influenced them to accept “no sense or knowledge of religion except what they implicitly took from their clergy,” and which made them “give themselves wholly up to their guidance in these matters,” has been carefully kept and

jealously guarded by their successors, and forms a noble inheritance, of which Catholic Irishmen of the present day feel legitimately proud. These schools, instead of destroying the implicit obedience to their clergy to which the Irish Papists of that day "gave themselves wholly up," were extirpated and destroyed by it themselves. At the bidding of their clergy, the people kept clear of them, and thus rendered them useless and innocuous. It was by the exercise of this great moral power of withdrawing Catholic youth from schools that were interdicted as dangerous to their faith, that the Irish Church was enabled to transform the *mixed systems* of national elementary education into one that is practically denominational. It would not be even tolerated on any other conditions. This too was the great social and religious force that annihilated the Queen's University, and that emptied the Queen's Colleges of their students, the moment these Institutions were authoritatively proclaimed to be "intrinsically dangerous to faith and morals." In fine, this was the great religious influence that closed up the Model Schools that had been erected at enormous expense in every part of the kingdom, that scared away National School Teachers from the Training College in Marlborough-street, as if it had been a moral plague-spot, and paralysed its efficiency so completely, that Mr. Trevelyan and the late Government could tolerate it no longer, and would have put an end to its existence, had it not been saved, when *in extremis*, by an unworthy compromise, which the present illustrious Archbishop of Dublin holds up as a sad example of "the folly of submitting to injustice." If the system of Intermediate Education does not speedily reform its ignorant, unnatural, and absurd programme of subjects for the examination of girls, it appears to me that it will soon become the duty of the Irish Church to try what effect the exercise of this great moral power may have in bringing it to its senses. Till the Irish Church, therefore, surrenders the tried, true and formidable weapon with which she has fought so many battles,

won so many victories, and conquered so many enemies, astute politicians like Mr. Chamberlain, will think twice before entering the arena to encounter her in mortal combat. But the Catholic Church in England, by submitting voluntarily or involuntarily to the principle of compulsory education, has lost or forfeited this highly effective weapon, and is thus comparatively defenceless.

According to the conditions under which political or social warfare is now carried on, the fate of English voluntary schools, will be decided at the polling booths in the present Election, or by the action that will be taken by one or other of the great political parties in the coming Parliament. As the Irish Parliamentary Party is sure to be sent again to St. Stephen's by the practically unanimous vote of the Irish Nation, so they will speak and act there, beyond all doubt, with the true and duly recognised voice and influence of the whole Irish people. It will return there with increased numerical strength, and with vastly increased political influence. As a party it is strong, able, eloquent, courageous, and marvellously united; and, besides being thoroughly disciplined, is guided by a skilful and experienced leader. It is not wantonly aggressive, but when wantonly assailed, it is singularly brave and defiant. The guardianship of the interests of Irish Catholic Education has been specially entrusted to its care. With such an able and experienced party to protect them and to fight for their interests and existence to the last extremities, the Minister who would assail Irish voluntary schools, would be little better than crazed or demented.

But the case of Catholic voluntary schools in England is very different indeed. They seem utterly helpless and wholly unprotected, and they lie literally at the mercy of their deadliest enemies. They will hardly have even one true representative to open his mouth in their defence in the coming Parliament. And yet it appears to me that half a dozen of earnest, able, and experienced men, banded together in the

House of Commons for the defence of these voluntary schools, would give them a better chance for their lives than their manifest intrinsic justice and merit, or all the friendly efforts that can be made from without to save them. On the other hand, the Radical party are fiercely and fanatically bent on destroying them. The support they expect from the Tory party will be insincere and half-hearted at the best ; and if the Tories can manage (as it is not improbable they might) to save their own schools by sacrificing them, they will let them go, not only without regret, but with pleasure. In this situation of affairs, the unwillingness of some English Catholics to join hands with their co-religionists in Ireland, and with their representatives in Parliament, to make an united effort to save Catholic education in their own country from being simply annihilated, passes, I confess, my comprehension. By refusing to accept the suggestion offered to them by your Lordship, they have, in my humble opinion, placed themselves in as false, as painful, as humiliating, and as unenviable a position as their worst enemies could wish to see them in. Why! speaking quite recently, through their recognised organs in the press, they have praised, eulogised, and literally lavished their admiration and approval on the noble, generous, and disinterested course of action recently taken by the Catholics of France in the late General Elections of that country. Till quite lately, French Catholics, with the characteristic impulsiveness of their Celtic nature, clung with an obstinate loyalty that was almost fanatical to the rival political factions that divided and weakened them. But with an effort of self-sacrifice that was simply heroic, they flung their political differences and preferences to the winds in the face of the common enemy, and uniting their scattered and distracted energies into one mighty effort, they dealt their persecutor a blow which brought him at once to his knees, and made him penitently promise that he should meditate no further aggressive designs against them. But the very men who eloquently

extolled and fervently admired the heights of heroism to which French self-denial rose in their late glorious achievement, when it comes to their own turn—because their prejudices are strong and their self-denial weak—find it painful, humiliating, and indeed quite impossible, to join their Irish fellow-Catholics in an effort that is absolutely necessary to save the cause of Catholic Education in their own country. Speaking on the question of Home Rule in one of my late audiences with the Holy Father, I perceived that the only argument against that measure that in any way disquieted him was, that the withdrawal of the Irish Parliamentary Party from the English House of Commons would leave Catholic interests throughout the whole British Empire wholly defenceless and unprotected. That argument was evidently of English origin, and fortunately admitted of a satisfactory answer which it would be out of place to repeat here. But it is not out of place to observe that the advocacy of the Irish Party, which the Sovereign Pontiff so highly prized, was not asked, need not be offered, and would be respectfully declined, even on a question of vital importance to the very existence of Catholic Education in England. One is reminded of the drunken tailor who, on learning that he had been rescued from drowning by an Orangeman, threw himself into the water again “that he might not be under a compliment *to such a fellow*.”

But it may be said that if English Catholics accepted Irish Parliamentary aid for the protection of Catholic voluntary schools, they would thereby virtually bind themselves to strengthen Mr. Parnell's hands in the coming Elections, and commit themselves to his Parliamentary Programme. But Mr. Parnell's Parliamentary Programme now practically confines itself to one great measure, the Legislative Independence of his country. English Catholics will find it hard to convince the world that the simple right of governing itself, which is now claimed by the unanimous voice of a thoroughly Catholic nation, is intrinsically an *essential evil*—a *malum in se*—and an evil of such magnitude

that rather than co-operate in its attainment, even in an infinitesimal decree (and English Catholics at their very best could do no more), the lesser of the two evils is—to let Catholic Education, the Catholic religion itself, and the salvation of the souls of their own countrymen, go.

But in return for the refusal of English Catholics to accept Irish Parliamentary aid for the protection of their own voluntary schools, we will take what I hope may not irreverently be called a Christian's revenge, and respectfully press that Parliamentary aid on their acceptance still. We have the gravest reasons for doing so. If the blighting curse of secularism be forcibly imposed by the Radicals on the English people; our poor dear countrymen in England, and not high English Catholics, will be the principal sufferers under that odious system. Irishmen at home can never foster anything like a feeling of indifference to the great spiritual or temporal interests of their countrymen in exile—especially in England. For, besides being our co-religionists, they are our own flesh and blood; and their affection and love for their kindred and country are enough to make Irishmen at home feel heartily ashamed of themselves. It is only in exile that an Irishman fully realises even to himself the depth and the strength and the fervour of the love, and the undying devotion that, he instinctively cherishes for the land that gave him birth. It is only by looking deeply into the heart of an Irishman in exile that you can fully comprehend the strong, vehement, and passionate attachment with which nature herself seems to have inspired the *race* for the land that is peculiarly their own. Seas and oceans may flow between that Irish exile and that land of his birth; and years upon years may have passed over his head, in the land of the stranger, since he lost the last fond glimpse of his own, yet his love for that land and the interests he feels in its happiness and welfare are fresher, stronger and tenderer than he ever felt them at home. One of the results of the misgovernment of centuries is, that an Irish exile, in quitting his

native shore, hardly ever carries with him anything of any value except his faith, and a generous spirit cheerfully to make every sacrifice that his faith may demand in whatever land he may happen to settle down. I have frequently heard American Bishops declare that the splendid churches and cathedrals which are the pride and the glory of Catholic America, were mainly erected by the earnings of Irish servant girls. Although I have no positive authority for the statement, yet I venture to say that Catholic voluntary schools in England were built and furnished mainly by the earnings of Irish Catholics. The destruction, therefore, of these voluntary schools would imply the cruel and unjust confiscation of a vast property, chiefly created by the labour and sacrifices of Irishmen. If Radical spoliation and injustice stopped here, we might perhaps have patience with it. But the Radicals aim at nothing short of the wholesale and merciless destruction of the education, the faith, and the religion of the Irish race in England. They aim directly at robbing it of its faith—the only valuable property it possesses—the only solid consolation and comfort that reconcile it to the painful weariness of exile.

The Radicals, therefore, are our deadliest enemies, and we must fight them bravely, manfully, and with all our might, as we are struggling with them for what is dearer to us than our very lives. I have no personal antipathy towards Mr. Chamberlain or any of his Radical followers. I even entertain a kind of qualified respect and esteem for Mr. Chamberlain himself personally. I admire him for his rare intellectual gifts; for his attractive eloquence; for the clearness and persuasion with which he reasons, and for his advanced and just opinions on the great question of the land. If Mr. Chamberlain were only a true Christian or, failing that, if he had not given himself up body and soul to a fanatical propagandism of irreligion, godlessness, and Board Schools, there is no man I would rather see in power. But as Mr. Chamberlain has made himself the champion of secu-

larism and irreligion, and thus placed himself in deadly antagonism to our dearest religious interests, it is fortunate, indeed, that the Irish Parliamentary Party is able to supply us with an advocate of Catholic truth, of Catholic Education, and of Irish Nationality as well—who is fully his equal in every respect, and in many respects is vastly superior to him. The brilliant success achieved by the Irish Party in the late session of Parliament was owing, not so much to their high intellectual gifts, to their unrivalled eloquence, and their splendid natural abilities, as to the patient, persevering industry with which they studied and mastered, even in their minutest details, the questions that came up for discussion, and thus qualified themselves to bring forward in defence of truth and justice, the strongest, the clearest, and the most persuasive arguments that the subject admitted of. It is evident, therefore, that each member of the Party must have had the liberty of following his own personal inclinations and preferences in choosing the subject which “*he made his own*,” and on which he was to speak for the Party, as well as for himself. Acting on these enlightened tactics, there can hardly be a doubt that Mr. Sexton will be the authoritatively accredited advocate of Catholic Education in the coming Parliament. I know no living man so highly qualified or so richly gifted for the efficient and successful discharge of that most important duty. His persuasive eloquence, his splendid abilities, his untiring industry, the readiness and fertility of his resources, coupled with the highest standard of Catholic instincts and feelings, make him the most eligible of living men for the high and difficult tasks of asserting the rights and defending the interests of Catholic Education. Although endowed with the gift of severe, searching and exhaustive inquiry, he takes in, as it were intuitively, the bearings and aspect of any great Catholic question with the nicest accuracy and precision, and down even to their minutest details. His powers of putting a great question with clear persuasive

force before such a fastidious audience as the House of Commons, and the skill with which he appeals to their feelings as well as to their reason in its favour, are almost unrivalled. Whilst he hits hard at the weak points of his adversary's case, and often mercilessly demolishes it, he never wantonly irritates him or wounds his feelings. Mr. Sexton is therefore not unpopular even with his political opponents, and is always listened to with attention and respect. I regard therefore Mr. Sexton's advocacy, supported, as it will be, by the Irish Party, with the whole Irish nation at its back, as the only existing agency by which English voluntary schools can be rescued from their present most perilous position. This, then, is the assistance which we now cheerfully offer, and, with the cordial co-operation of our co-religionists in England, it is hardly possible that the Radicals will be allowed to have their way. In the meantime, it appears to me that Mr. Sexton ought to be as highly appreciated and esteemed, and as popular with Irishmen in England, as he is with their countrymen at home. He is a great public benefactor to both. Neither can I see any reason why he should not be a *persona grata* even with English Catholics themselves. The interests of Catholic Education and of the Catholic religion itself are of a higher order than purely human or political interests ever can be; and therefore the services expected from Mr. Sexton for Catholics in England are far more valuable than anything he has hitherto done for us. A great, popular and enthusiastic public movement has lately been set on foot to organise and prepare a National Testimonial to be presented to Mr. Sexton, in grateful recognition of the splendid services he has already rendered to his country and his religion. It appears to me that Irishmen in England ought to fall into line with Irishmen at home, and join cordially and enthusiastically in this movement.

I see no reason why English Catholics either should hold aloof from it, and I hardly think they will. At any rate a

glorious rivalry should arise between the two sections of the Irish race, to make this testimonial worthy of themselves and worthy of the man the nation wishes to honour. I wish this movement every success, and I heartily recommend it to Irishmen in both countries, but especially do I recommend it to the faithful of my own Diocese. Nobody is expected to give much; but every body is expected to give a little. I never knew the faithful of the Diocese of Meath to shrink from the performance of a duty, no matter what might be the sacrifice it would cost.

I have to apologise to your Lordship for the length of this letter. I am greatly afraid that I committed more than indiscretion by addressing it to you without leave or without even apprizing you of my intentions. Trusting, however, that your Lordship will generously condone anything that may have been wrong or reprehensible in the course of action I have taken,

I remain,

With profound respect and esteem,

Ever sincerely yours,

✠ THOMAS NULTY.

MULLINGAR,

18th November, 1885.



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